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## **Revisiting Morale under the Bombs: The Gender of Affect in Darmstadt, 1942-1945**

Intensified Allied bombing brought World War II into the homes of the German civilian population in the spring of 1942. Aerial attack alerts and bombing raids shaped life in larger German cities such as Hamburg, Köln, Essen, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Dresden, and redefined the term “home front”. Bringing destruction, displacement and death, the war heavily affected urban populations in their physical and mental wellbeing for more than three years. Yet, somehow, everyday life continued. Fritz Limmer (1881 – 1947), a retired chemistry professor who spent the air war in the Hessian town of Darmstadt, recorded his experience in a diary. During the summer of 1944 Limmer observed with growing concern the effect war had on the members of his family: “Grete and Helgard [his wife and daughter] absolutely have to run to the movies after lunch. (Reverie). I am astonished by Grete’s behavior, as she knows nothing about her siblings’ fate in Romania. It defies comprehension. And all the talk about ‘finding relaxation’ doesn’t impress me either.” He feared for his family’s cohesion: “And thus the disintegration between us invariably continues, precisely now when we can somewhat endure this time only with harmony. It will become even more difficult than it already is (...)”.<sup>1</sup>

Limmer’s pessimistic observations tempt us to explore a society decisively shaped by war and the corroding effects conflict had on the individual. In the male defined sphere of military conflict, the aspect of gendered experience invites particular attention.<sup>2</sup> With a whole generation of men gone to the battlefields of Europe and North Africa, involved in the administration and plundering of conquered territory, or participating in Germany’s genocidal machinery (though joined in the concentration camps by a growing number of female SS auxiliaries), the exigencies of war on the home front had a lasting effect on gender relations in German society and

profoundly affected the idealized role conceptions of womanhood and manhood in Nazi society.<sup>3</sup> To a certain extent, this was a re-occurrence of processes observable in Germany during World War I, when “total mobilization destroyed the divisions between the military and civil society and between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ spheres, only to replace them with the separation between the male combat zone of the battlefield and the female noncombat zone of producing and reproducing the means of destruction” as women replaced the absent men in the war economy.<sup>4</sup>

A new feature of WWII was the physical proximity of a growing number of women to death and destruction. Inspired by Michael Geyer’s 1995 suggestion that the history of war should be written as “a history of organized deadly force”, Karen Hagemann concluded that “the dimension of violence, which was generally exercised and suffered in gender-specific ways, should also be a central focus of a social and gender history of the (...) war.”<sup>5</sup> This article explores how the experience of “deadly force”, as well as the gender and age-related preparation and knowledge with which individuals encountered war violence and made sense of it, shaped social re-organization during the final months of the war. It shows how, in WWII Germany, female roles in relation to the state – regardless of whether women mended clothes, produced ammunition, or actively helped in combat to defend the home front – underwent a redefinition, ideologically recasting all these activities as patriotic duty to the Fatherland. Nazi propaganda sought to prevent a reoccurrence of the 1918 home front breakdown, which had contributed to Germany’s willingness to end the war, and in which women had played an important role.<sup>6</sup> It utilized the stab-in-the-back myth, according to which the World War I armistice and peace treaty represented a betrayal of military efforts by the people and politics on the home front. Nazi propaganda used the myth to gain an electoral following in the Weimar Republic and then

employed it to mobilize Germany for war, exploiting feelings of the nation's humiliation, unfair treatment at Versailles and a promise of renewed greatness.<sup>7</sup> Ingrained in collective memory and political entrenchment, it remained an influential lesson for the Party and wartime society alike.

This study complicates the dualism of male battlefield and female home front further through an examination of the gendered experience of bombing in Darmstadt, a small town near Frankfurt on Main. It is based on a previously unexamined source base of home front narratives from 1945, transcribed interviews with men and women from different social and generational backgrounds who had recently lived through the bombing experience. As strategic bombing was a new feature of air warfare, the United States military had a vested interest in learning about its outcomes and efficiency. As soon as they entered Germany, American occupying forces began extracting strategic and military lessons from captured administrative records and from interviews with German officials, industrialists, workers, and civilians. This effort led to the publication of a series of 208 studies about bombing in Europe (and Japan) during World War II that became known as the *United States Strategic Bombing Surveys* (USSBS). Historians interested in air warfare over Nazi Germany have used the USSBS reports on German morale extensively. Shaped by the surveys' initial purpose, these historians' narratives have featured Allied air strategy, thus literally writing history from above. By and large, these historical works focus on the course and material effects of the air raids;<sup>8</sup> yet others turn their attention to the home front experience, and the immediate chaos and suffering resulting from the raids.<sup>9</sup>

While the USSBS reports are popular among historians of the German home front, the original interviews have been practically ignored as a source of wartime experience. Over 170 interview transcripts from Darmstadt have survived and are housed in the US National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The USSBS morale division group began the interview series in

Darmstadt on April 4, 1945, more than a month before the war in Europe officially ended with German surrender. For each interviewee the face sheet provides information on sex, age, and marital status, number of children, education, and occupation during the war as well as membership in NASDAP organizations, personal material situation, and deaths in the family. Accordingly, this allows for an analysis by social strata, gender, and age cohort.

Using interviews as historical sources raises familiar questions about the reliability and veracity of memories. Moreover, this set of interviews emerged from a specific context. They were recorded at a transformative moment, in the late spring of 1945, when Germans collectively and individually tried to make sense of defeat in a war that was meant to achieve Germany's world domination. The context is thus very different from the *longue durée* perspective that Jörg Arnold offers in his comparative study of collective urban war memory in East and West German towns.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, placing the individual in relation to a nascent collective memory can be useful as well in understanding these more immediate testimonies in regards to agency, subjectivity and the self.<sup>11</sup> At the same time it is important to contextualize the interviews, and to be mindful of the power relations at play between the interviewers and their subjects.

The fact that the American occupiers conducted these interviews might leave the reader wondering about the respondents' authenticity as well as interviewers' biases. German civilians may not have been willing to reveal the whole extent of their defeat to the former enemy or they might have concealed their politics in order to avoid blame and punishment for the crimes of the Third Reich. The USSBS unit outfitted interviewers, often native German speakers, with a detailed list of 43 questions that measured 1) emotional change; 2) changes in political attitudes; and 3) in behavior of the respondents; as well as 4) measures of certain experiences and beliefs assumed to correlate with the moral effects produced by bombing. Specific information

objectives accompanied the questions, instructing the interviewers to probe for elaborate answers.<sup>12</sup> Thus, a narrative arch and a strong element of guidance were built into the interview structure. Granted, interviewers strived foremost to create an atmosphere of trust by building good rapport and using the guarantee of full anonymity. This was meant to put the interviewee at ease, to overcome respondents' initial "you Americans" versus "us Germans" attitude. Interviewers rated both rapport and the respondents' perceived truthfulness on the face sheet, and noted any suspicions.

It seems that the peaceful course of the American occupation provided Darmstadtters with growing trust in the new ruling authority, especially those who had suffered under Nazi surveillance. Responding to a question about how he was faring under the occupation, a former soldier and camp inmate sounded relieved: "Things are now going good. I am now free and can speak freely. Before I lived always in fear, could not speak freely because of the Gestapo."<sup>13</sup> Although the analytical challenges around omissions and "memory grooming" remain, the interviews offer an exciting opportunity for a close reading of wartime experience. While the interview transcripts are not traditional forms of life writing, they nevertheless allow us to discover complex social actors. They document one moment in the ongoing narrative process of an individual "with a real history and psychology" constructing him- or herself in the specific context of WWII Nazi society and defeat.<sup>14</sup> As Maynes and others have argued, "human agency and individual social action is best understood in connection with the construction of selfhood in and through historically specific social relationships and institutions."<sup>15</sup> We can thus approach the home front with a differentiated perspective; using narrative analytical approaches based on post-structuralist concepts of language as representative and constitutive of subjectivity, while simultaneously historicizing gender difference in lived experience.<sup>16</sup>

Bombing offers a relatively “gender-neutral” wartime event as historical context for gender analysis. In this way this study is careful not to recreate the archetypal division between male perpetrators and female victims that has been the subject of passionate discussion in German women’s history over the last three decades, and which has centered on topics such as rape, expulsion or other war events that have been seen as predominately female ordeals.<sup>17</sup> Air raids, instead, have been at the center of a hard fought historical debate about general German victimhood in World War II. The most contentious point was whether acknowledging German suffering would relativize Third Reich war crimes, especially the Holocaust.<sup>18</sup> In the light of these debates, this study by no means wishes to measure or compare suffering, but rather seeks to explore human rational and affective capabilities for endurance and resilience in a state of emergency.

Allied strategic bombing aimed to destroy both the war economy and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, together with the public solidarity and loyalty to the Nazi regime that the concept implied. Morale became a prime target at the height of the war in 1942, chosen with the hope that if military success on the battlefield remained unattainable, American and British bombing and demoralization efforts could defeat Nazi Germany from within. The Allies believed that, if it were put under sufficient material and social pressure, the German population would eventually lose faith in its leadership and the home front would collapse, emulating the situation of 1918 and leading to a quicker end to the war. In fact, by targeting the German war industry and its workers, bombing effectively caused an uneven share of hardships between urban and rural areas. This reinvigorated long-standing societal tensions between working class and middle class, spatially represented by urban centers and the countryside.<sup>19</sup> By the time World War II ended for Germany on May 8, 1945, the consequences of Allied bombing had resulted in

305,000 fatalities, 780,000 wounded, and 1,865,000 homes destroyed.<sup>20</sup> Close to 5 million people were evacuated and 20 million were deprived of utilities. Altogether, more than a third of the population had been physically affected. Yet even during the heaviest bombings in 1944/45 there was neither widespread organized dissent against the Nazi regime, nor strike action in the war industries. Sociologists agree that the results of the United States Strategic Bombing Surveys indicate that the bombing failed to incite major panics or sustained chaos.<sup>21</sup> And even the US military analysts admitted in 1945 that strategic bombing was not as successful as expected in undermining German morale or loyalty to the Nazi regime.<sup>22</sup> More recently, Nicholas Stargardt has suggested that, “far from leading to collapse, successive crises acted as catalysts of radical transformation (...). Major disasters like Stalingrad and Hamburg did indeed lead to a catastrophic fall in the regime’s popularity, but they did not themselves call patriotic commitment into question.”<sup>23</sup> The war, he argues, though unpopular, remained legitimate.

Stargardt is the latest voice in a literature that has revised the heretofore common view that dissolution of the – illusory – monolithic *Volksgemeinschaft* equaled the collapse of morale. Earlier research has pointed to the fact that atomization of the home front and solidarity existed alongside each other as “individuals and groups were increasingly thrown upon their own resources—as multiple and competing communities of fate—amid the escalating chaos in Germany.”<sup>24</sup> And Christian Goeschel found that it was not a lack of social integration, but rather the specter of defeat, ideological fanaticism or fear of the advancing enemy armies that caused a dip in morale followed by a wave of suicides in the spring of 1945.<sup>25</sup>

What becomes evident is that we need a more complex understanding of German wartime morale, one that goes beyond *Volksgemeinschaft* and similar, objectifying terminology. Morale has a collective emotional life, it is a relational concept that becomes traceable in the individual’s



interaction with culturally specific social dynamics or power techniques, such as the stab-in-the-back myth that the Nazis continued to employ in their mobilization propaganda – a collective memory of national shame and betrayal in 1918 that could only be overcome if all Germans fulfilled their patriotic duty. Morale, then, is not a delimited object that can “break or be lost”, it is a “commonplace, a dimension of all activities”, as Ben Anderson proposes.<sup>26</sup> Morale is thus defined by its in-betweenness, comported with what affect scholar Brian Massumi has described as the individual’s capacity for simultaneously affecting and being affected in an ongoing process of change.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that the affect of morale can be traced, too, in the ways in which people adopt or react against specific, yet changing gender structures in the Third Reich, whether they did so knowingly or not. The question I want to ask here is: how did morale relate to the gendered self?

A town of moderate size, Darmstadt in the Gau of Hesse-Nassau, is a suitable location for a case study to engage with subtleties of communal cohesion and gender relations in situations of emergency. Surrounded by densely forested rolling hills, secluded Darmstadt is situated in the Rhine-Main area about 30 kilometers from Frankfurt. Only half an hour away by train from the rural, agriculturally rich Odenwald region, Darmstadt, the former administrative center of the grand duchy Hesse, was a *Beamtenstadt* (town of civil servants) with small industry and large residential areas in the 1930s. The town was popular with tourists for its cultural riches and historic buildings including the narrow, but charming late medieval center of the city. On March 5, 1933, 50 percent of the participating voters in Darmstadt cast their ballot for the NSDAP, all in all 30,932 votes, thereby exceeding results above the Reich’s average of 43.9 percent. These elections saw a record voter turnout of 89 percent, not surprising as this is considered to be the first undemocratic election of the Third Reich.<sup>28</sup> Yet Darmstadt had become a stronghold of the

Nazi party already during the Great Depression, providing above Reich average results in Reichstag elections from 1930 onwards.<sup>29</sup> Darmstadt's population, numbering approximately 110,000 in 1939, remained relatively steady over the course of the war until it dropped abruptly after large area bombings by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in September 1944.<sup>30</sup> The local food administration reported the lowest population count for January of 1945 with 50,487, signifying an overall population decline of 54 percent. People returned with accelerated frequency only after the town surrendered to the American army on March 25, 1945, pushing the number up to 54,274 in June 1945.<sup>31</sup>

This study attempts to bring these numbers to life, and to illuminate gendered aspects of extra-ordinary, yet almost daily, hardships in Darmstadt during the final year of World War II. Because of the simultaneous occurrence of the Holocaust, the Jewish experience of the bombings as well as that of ethnic minorities in Darmstadt is difficult to reconstruct. Under escalating anti-Semitism and racial policy, anyone who had the means and the foresight emigrated to the United States or to South America before the British began strategic bombing in 1942, as quarterly reports of the Jewish Mutual Assistance Society and monthly residential reports of the Darmstadt Jewish congregation show. The remaining 1,378 Jews in the region were sent to a crueler destiny in four deportation transports in 1942 and 1943 that departed eastwards from the Rhineland to the transfer ghettos Theresienstadt and Piaski-Lublin, from where many went on to perish in the eastern extermination camps.<sup>32</sup> By the spring of 1943, Darmstadt was stripped of its Jewish population, and thus their stories were not recorded in the USSBS interviews.<sup>33</sup> During the same period, several million people from Poland, the Protectorate, and the Ukraine were forcibly shipped to the Reich to work in the war industries and agriculture. More than two thousand arrived in Darmstadt in the spring of 1942 and their number rose to 6,560 in May 1944, of which

about two thirds were men. Yet this number never exceeded 12 percent of the overall workforce.<sup>34</sup> Minorities falling outside of the racialized *Volksgemeinschaft* were for the most part excluded from communal air raid protection.<sup>35</sup> Foreign workers had an air defense status similar to that of Jews who were married to German citizens. Usually, they were not allowed to look for shelter in communal cellars and were left to fend for themselves. The air war over Germany caused a high death toll among foreign workers also because they were often housed in the vicinity of targeted industry.

Aware of such limitations, this study traces the experience of bombing among the racially defined *Volksgemeinschaft*. The first part examines the spatial specificity of Darmstadt as an unlikely air raid target, and explores how this circumstance influenced the population's psychological and emotional preparation for the air raids. This is followed by an analysis of the war's implications for personal life, the matters that relate to affective collectivity, relationships, and emotional as well as physical health. Ultimately, this study explores the affective dialogue between the personal sphere of survival and the public sphere of warfare, and examines how these changed in relation to increasingly fluid gender roles in a besieged Third Reich. Interestingly, the bombing put patriarchal society under pressure and set the stage for a period of female self-sufficiency during the second half of the war from as early as 1942, thus predating the widespread attribution of female agency to the "hour of the woman" during the final days of the war and Allied occupation in post-war Germany.<sup>36</sup>

### **Preparing for the Worst: Air Raid Protection**

Until 1942, the German home front remained relatively untouched by the havoc of war. Great Britain flew minor bombing missions against industrial targets in the Ruhr beginning in the spring of 1940, but, technologically as well as strategically, bombing as a means of warfare was still in its infancy.<sup>37</sup> After having used aerial bombing in the Spanish Civil War and the invasion of Poland, Hitler also experimented with the bombing of British cities, including London, in aerial attacks in the fall of 1940. This campaign became known as the *Blitz*, the first intentional large-scale bombardment of civilian areas that killed more than twenty thousand people.<sup>38</sup> Later in the war, the German Luftwaffe also bombed Russian cities such as Moscow and Leningrad on the eastern front. Despite the bombings, the war in the west against the British did not proceed as quickly as the offensive against France had that summer — the planned invasion of Britain (Operation Sea Lion) was never carried through — and Germany began preparations for the eventuality of extended air war with Britain in the fall of 1940.

Officials ranked the town of Darmstadt low in terms of air raid endangerment because of its military insignificance and small-scale war industry.<sup>39</sup> The only decisive industrial sites were Merck's chemical plant, a renowned producer of pharmaceutical drugs, and the machinery constructor Röhm und Haas, which were both located at the industrial outskirts in the northern part of town. Together, they produced over 50 per cent of the city's industrial production and employed 42.6 per cent of local industrial workers.<sup>40</sup> Darmstadt's overall industrial significance was negligible, less than 0.2 percent of the German total production.<sup>41</sup> The Gau rather concentrated its protection and defense efforts in industrially and strategically important cities such as nearby Frankfurt on Main, which was later indeed heavily bombed.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to the rational calculations of the mobilization agency, Darmstadters developed a variety of assertions as to why their city would be spared from the bombs. Some thought that the Allies would not be able to find Darmstadt because of its secluded location in the forests. Others believed Britain would not dare to attack the residence of the grand duke of Hesse-Darmstadt's English wife, Princess Margaret of Hesse and Rhine, whose friendly ties to the British Crown were well known. Even more curiously, the Merck factory presented for many an inhibition to Allied bombing because of its international reputation as a producer of rare medications.<sup>43</sup> Explaining away the danger was an important psychological coping mechanism for a population under the threat of air raids. To them, it was a way to maintain normalcy and to perform their quotidian tasks in a war that was unavoidably moving closer to their homes.

When they finally occurred, the attacks caught Darmstadters mentally ill-prepared. What Darmstadt's citizens could not know was that their beautiful city would become the testing ground for a new marking and bombing strategy of RAF Bomber Command. For this maneuver, as military historian Max Hastings claims, Darmstadt was chosen at random: "In September 1944, 5 Group [an RAF bomber fleet] were seeking previously undamaged area targets of manageable size upon which to test the accuracy and effectiveness of various marking and bombing techniques at tolerable cost – in other words at limited penetration inside Germany."<sup>44</sup> So far spared from heavy raids, Darmstadt fitted that description perfectly. The Kavallerie Exerzierplatz was chosen as the marking-point because of its white soil, which was visible even by night. From here, the bombers would fly along seven aiming-lines covering an area roughly shaped like a fan, later called "Todesfächer".<sup>45</sup>

But even without their stoic optimism, Darmstadters had little to go on in terms of preparation for such an enormous attack. True, administrative orders from Frankfurt raised

awareness of aerial defense in the whole Gau of Hesse-Nassau and issued guidelines for the case of air raids to surrounding police departments as well as NSDAP regional leaderships. In most of these air defense decrees, the population's self-protection (*Selbstschutz*) occupied center-stage. To a large extent the protection measures depended on public cooperation. In general, air raid protection designated housing communities (*Hausgemeinschaften*), consisting either of apartment building tenants or the persons who lived in the same neighborhood, as the smallest unit in fire fighting, first aid service, and repairs.<sup>46</sup> Concerned about the negative effect of visible destruction on public support for the war, the authorities emphasized the central role of the cooperative housing community to clear away the rubble as soon as possible, of course aided by mass organizations such as the Hitler Youth. Towards the end of the war, increasingly foreign workers, concentration-camp prisoners, and POWs were assigned to the task.<sup>47</sup>

Understandably, the population of Darmstadt was dissatisfied with the local air raid protection: "These air raid precautions were nonsense. The water basins that they built were useless, what they should have done was to built [sic] shelters and bunkers rather than to have us sit in these cellars," an interviewee grumbled.<sup>48</sup> Aerial defense officials regarded proper bunkers as unnecessary for a city with low-level endangerment. The public shelters within the city limits held only roughly 20,000 people, which left the vast majority of the inhabitants to their own devices.<sup>49</sup> Most of the population stayed in their houses' re-enforced cellars, so-called self-protection shelters (*Selbstschutzräume*), that supplied reasonable protection in the first year of the air war, but would become tragic death traps during the fire blaze of September 1944. In the apartment buildings of the inner city the *Hausgemeinschaft* was responsible for the re-enforcement of the cellars and passageways to those of neighboring houses—a provision that would later save many lives.<sup>50</sup>

A cohesive air raid alarm system was introduced as early as November 1940. Possibly these steps were taken in the expectation of retaliation for the Luftwaffe's bombings of British cities.<sup>51</sup> Ten minutes were considered sufficient time for urban populations to retreat into shelters and bunkers without disrupting their normal life more than necessary. German radar was able to detect enemy planes long before they reached German territory, which would have allowed for earlier warnings, were it not for the Royal Air Force's (RAF) terror strategy.<sup>52</sup> British pilots chose detours on their way to Germany with the goal of leaving the Germans in the dark about the target. At the height of the air war, this led to a "war of nerves" especially in western Germany, because the alarms sounded in all cities as soon as allied planes approached the Reich border close to the industrial centers along the rivers Rhine and Ruhr. By the time Darmstadt surrendered to American forces on March 25, the town's population experienced more than 700 aerial warnings (*Luftwarnungen*) and alarms but merely seventeen attacks.<sup>53</sup>

The communal aspect of survival measures fueled the denunciation culture that the Nazis had fostered since the seizure of power in 1933. Black-out violations were an easy way to turn in disagreeable neighbors to the Darmstadt Gestapo. In addition to proper oversights, such as accidentally switching on lights in rooms without the mandatory window black-out covers, some perplexing complaints were brought to the attention of the authorities. For instance, in February 1943 a woman came forward who denounced her neighbor for leaving white laundry out to dry in the garden, allegedly revealing Darmstadt's location to enemy bombers at night.<sup>54</sup> Both men and women contributed to the denunciation culture, yet conflict resolution was gendered, as female disobedience to authority usually attracted more scrutiny. During a light attack in April 1943, neighborly animosities played out in the self-protection shelter of Eschollbrückerstrasse 44. A man and a woman refused the orders of both the block and aerial defense wardens to

extinguish the flames. The man's refusal to do his duty, on the grounds of him claiming to suffer a bad stomach ache, resulted in him becoming embroiled in a shouting match with the wardens. His resistance to the ensuing official charge of "air defense refusal" on health grounds was eventually accepted by the police. The woman, a trained fire brigade auxiliary, refused to join the fire fighters because of her motherly responsibility to her two children while her husband served in the war. She loudly challenged the wardens' authority by pointing out their inability to bring order into the habitually overcrowded community shelter. An unsupervised woman, speaking up publically, attracted special scrutiny. In an official complaint, the air defense warden showed no compassion for her situation.<sup>55</sup> The resolute women in turn showed no remorse, but rather implied a gendered bias and misogyny on part of the wardens in what she felt was unfair treatment. During her police questioning, she mentioned that the block warden had once beaten his wife nearly senseless in front of everybody.<sup>56</sup> In fact, she juxtaposed her failure to do her duty with the wardens' failure to do theirs. At the same time, she maintained that her principal responsibility was to look after her children, not to safeguard the housing community from expanding fires. Family unity became an increasingly political topic that informed women's agency at the home front and their wartime relationship with the regime.<sup>57</sup> Challenges to changing gender norms, but also neighborly quarrels, were fought out in the field of self-protection matters and evacuation policies.

How women experienced the war was dependent on their individual situation. Nevertheless, some trends can be observed that relate to age cohort, employment, or marital status.<sup>58</sup> Nazi reproduction policies shaped the female experience of the early war years most explicitly. Racial purity and hereditary health made matrimony desirable and marital status was an important marker for women in Nazi Germany.<sup>59</sup> Yet in the later years of the war, an



increasing number of married women was conscripted to the war economy. While women with children could decide to remain in or depart from the workforce depending on their financial situation, childless or working-class married women did not enjoy the freedom to make this decision.<sup>60</sup> In the spring of 1943, the female German work population in Darmstadt exceeded the number of male German workers for the first time and reached its peak in August 1943 with 24,985 women in the workforce.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, a cohort of young, unmarried women came into closer contact with the war effort during their Year of Duty, while experiencing a high degree of independence from their family, for instance for the Reich Labor Service for Female Youth (RADwJ) or the Auxiliary War Service (*Kriegshilfsdienst*). In general, working women were singled out as the weakest link in everyday life under the bombs; their unsupervised presence in working environments that they shared with foreign workers gave rise to suspicion and concerns about moral degeneration.

In July 1943, Germany's military leadership announced that women were to join the fire brigades because previously available men were called up to serve in the military.<sup>62</sup> Although accompanied by trained fire fighters, these women entered danger just like everybody else in the brigade. A year later, about 50,000 women between the ages of 17 and 40 had "volunteered" for this service.<sup>63</sup> The same year, women joined the anti-aircraft forces. The press portrayed their work as posing a challenge to femininity because "natural inclination and tendency often stand in the way of matters which present no difficulties to men." At the same time, the press glorified female auxiliary service as a duty to the fatherland: "In return, however, these women wear the soldier's garb of honor."<sup>64</sup> Down-playing the military nature of this war assignment while at the same time accommodating contemporary ideas about gender, the article resumed using emotional rhetoric: "Continuous training and further knowledge of the instruments soon teaches

the AA Auxiliaries to love and look after their searchlights as only women can.”<sup>65</sup> It needs to be pointed out that in terms of survival, this post at the searchlights was more dangerous than, say, handling an anti-aircraft gun. The searchlights were highly visible even up to several thousand feet and — as an instant threat to approaching Allied bomber planes — they were often the first target for the vanguard Mosquito planes.

Women thus performed male jobs not only within the war industry but also in military defense of their country. This was an unprecedented level of female involvement in the war effort, and was pronouncedly different from WWI in terms of its social acceptance.<sup>66</sup> As a consequence, the experience of duty and danger contributed to increased female independence in German patriarchal society that played out in family relations well before Germany’s defeat and Allied occupation.<sup>67</sup> However, experience of public involvement outside of the home community was mostly limited to single women and adolescent girls.

Many mothers, and especially middle class women often avoided conscription into the war economy or the auxiliary services, yet became involved in the NSV or the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* (National Socialist Women’s Organization, NSF) where their duties mostly did not reach beyond the city limits.<sup>68</sup> In Nazi Germany, the power of decision-making regarding the upbringing and education of children was legally ascribed to the father, but the realities of the war transferred this responsibility to women. In the absence of their husbands, these women not only raised and protected the children alone or with the help of older family members, but also were responsible for choices such as evacuating or staying in Darmstadt.<sup>69</sup> Mothers thus took on the roles of fathers as well, while support from grandparents was diminished by war deprivations. Due to exposure to raid nights and the stress of the daily alarms, the health of many elderly people was poor. Instead of alleviating the responsibility

placed on young mothers, the generation over fifty years of age quickly became an additional burden and strained financial resources. A 25-year-old widow with little education, mother of a boy aged 8, said: “I got a family ‘Unterhalt’ of 140 RM when my husband was killed. That’s what I lived on since. Also mother has money saved. Mother became very sick after Sept. [the attack of September 1944] and was in bed more than out of bed. I only helped out here and there. I had to stay home with my mother.”<sup>70</sup> After the raids, young women were the quickest to adapt to the changed circumstances. They organized housing and clothing for the entire family, older males included. This constituted an important shift in the generational and patriarchal structure of the German family.

Daily raid alerts also made it difficult for women to perform their household chores. Asked what had been the worst thing that the raids brought with them, a mother (34) of two boys, who were five and ten years old at the time, complained: “I could not take care of my household the way I used to.”<sup>71</sup> Alarms interrupted shopping for groceries or the preparation of food. The air war prevented housewives from fulfilling the gendered expectations placed on them by German society under Nazism,<sup>72</sup> adding more pressure to the observational scrutiny under which women whose husbands were absent stood. It was not fear for her life, but rather the experience of unfinished housewifely duties on a daily basis that undermined the woman’s resilience, as she tried to maintain her sense of self in relation to her patriotic commitment.

Exhaustion and lack of sleep were the most common effects that the alerts and bombings had on popular health. Shortages, especially in vitamin-rich foods or soap, and declining quality of meals led to weight loss over the years and deterioration of physical health. Gastrointestinal illnesses, commonly caused by lack of nutrition, often also had psychosomatic origins and affected both men and women.<sup>73</sup> Limmer, who recorded a surprisingly balanced diet in his diary,

writes almost weekly about his “catarrh” (gastro-enteritis, a chronic inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract). Female interviewees talked about their “nerves.” As one 36-year-old housewife explained:

Every time the siren sounded, I went into a different shelter with the idea that the one I was in last time would surely be hit. It was a great fear that one had, a terrible fear, I think all women experienced it, the men not so they stood outside and watched; but I put cotton in my ears to shut myself out as completely as possible. It was too awful to talk about.<sup>74</sup>

Symptoms such as these were called “alert psychosis.” In 1943, after the population had endured months of the sustained Allied air campaign in the northwest, the Central Office for Public Health gave advice for forming “physical and mental ‘hedgehogs’ so that the points of attack by terror and bombs are greatly reduced.”<sup>75</sup> To prevent illness such as pneumonia, or to lessen the tendency to panic, the office recommended actively developing resources of resilience, so-called “positive energy”: “In this case these sources are unrelenting toughness, fanaticism and a glowing hatred, which the soldier too only develops at such moments.”<sup>76</sup> Clearly, the women were asked to take on soldierly qualities, further calling into question the separation of front and home front. While girls and young women who came of age in the militaristic environment of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls, *BDM*), firmly indoctrinated by Nazi ideology, showed some indicators of the required toughness, middle-aged and old women had difficulties conjuring up the right spirit to join such an affective community of hatred.<sup>77</sup>

### ***The Brandnacht***

The night of September 11/12, 1944 ended all illusions regarding the low probability of Darmstadt being targeted. With increasing Allied success in the skies over Germany and decreasing numbers of available targets, the town's luck ran out. In his USSBS interview a 33-year-old engineering assistant at the Technical University remembered:

The attack came at 11:30. (...) We heard that there was a squadron over the Saar region headed east, then that there was one west of Frankfurt headed east. Then that the one in the south had turned north at Heidelberg, and that the northern one had turned south at Frankfurt. That could mean only one thing. Those planes had Darmstadt written on them.<sup>78</sup>

There was little time for rushing to safety between the warnings and the actual attack. No. 627 RAF mosquito squadron released the first target identification markers at 11.51 pm, three minutes after flares had illuminated the night sky over Darmstadt. At 11.54 pm, they dropped the first incendiaries, which would be followed by 979 tons of explosives (so-called block busters, which sever roofs and walls of houses yielding them more vulnerable to fire bombs), air mines, phosphorus bombs, and more incendiaries over the course of the next fifty-one minutes.<sup>79</sup>

The effectiveness of this new carpet-bombing strategy was evident in the city's residential areas. In a matter of minutes, flames soared high, producing smoke and high temperatures that even melted glass. The fires turned cellars into death traps, as the young engineering assistant explained: "The cellar started to get smoky. My neighbor and I helped old women that were there get out. We had to lead them by the hand. We got them into the bunker which we had built ourselves in the neighborhood."<sup>80</sup> In the absence of public bunkers in

Darmstadt, the engineering assistant's neighborhood had built their own in a common effort of self-protection. Since the beginning of the British strategic bombing campaign, then, *Selbstschutz* in Darmstadt had become more than the abstract concept that Gregor describes in the case of Nuremberg where "The vast bulk of the population fell into the category of *Selbstschutz*, which, essentially, meant that they were to take to their cellars and hope for the best."<sup>81</sup> On the contrary, if resources were available, self-protection precautions not only increased chances of survival, they could also help to sustain people psychologically. *Selbstschutz* offered people in less protected towns such as Darmstadt a notion of control because they felt they had done everything in their power to increase their safety. It also contributed to the development of communal bonds and mutual responsibility as illustrated by the men securing the evacuation of older women from the basement. When remaining in the cellar became life threatening, this housing community together decided to make the risky switch to the safer bunker.

Whereas young women had no prior experience in warfare, older women could at least relate the World War II home front experience to their memories of World War I. "I simply felt that the war should not have come. We older people have suffered enough in the first war. I was very frightened when the war broke out," a 61-year-old widow told her interviewer.<sup>82</sup> But even the ability to make comparisons to World War I did not necessarily mean that the older female generation fared better in the war. Knowledge about arms and bombs became crucial for the ability to act rationally and survive. Besides small incendiary bombs, which caused only limited fires and were relatively easy to extinguish with water, the British bombing squadrons increasingly dropped larger canister bombs containing phosphorous solutions that caught fire upon contact with air. The force of impact spread the incendiary substance causing everything that came in contact with it to burn immediately. Sand was the only efficient remedy as it soaked

up the phosphorous.<sup>83</sup> Officials had tried to keep news about this novel British bomb low profile. The hesitance to share vital information with the public reveals a considerable dilemma for the state between practicable means for survival and a continued propaganda effort. By letting only the exclusively male aerial defense auxiliaries of the early air war years in on the information and prohibiting the publication of this fire prevention awareness, women were initially excluded from crucial knowledge.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the newspapers and even pamphlets like *Sirene*, which were published to educate the public about air raid provisions, kept their advice very simple.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the ignorance of certain bombs' particular features made the female population physically and mentally more vulnerable during aerial attacks. Recalling her experiences during one of the early raids on Darmstadt in 1943, a 34-year old housewife apologetically mentions her lack of knowledge about appropriate conduct near dropped air-mines:

When we had alarm I thought it was not actually a raid, but the bombs were dropping soon afterwards. I took my child, left everything, and ran to the cellar. About two houses away from us an air-mine dropped. The concussion was so great, my child and I were thrown on the floor. I did not know then that we had to lie down.<sup>86</sup>

With new war techniques and the different political environment of the Third Reich many elderly people, especially less educated women, had difficulty adapting. Yet, they seemed neither afraid nor embarrassed to disclose their lack of political knowledge.<sup>87</sup> "I felt after the second big raid that I did not want to continue with the war, but I was caught [sic] between the bombings and the Government. I knew that I could not say anything. My grandson told me so."<sup>88</sup> The 73-year-old housewife relied on the assistance of younger male relatives to maneuver through the pitfalls of Nazi society. This woman constructed her selfhood as a victim of politics, paralyzed by tensions between her desire for peace and government demands on her resilience. But younger women

also declared ignorance of political matters or refused to answer political questions, which raised interviewers' suspicion.<sup>89</sup> Given that vital information about aerial attacks was hardly accessible for women until well into the strategic bombing phase, the female population was to some degree dependent on the shared knowledge of their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. Their ignorance possibly led to a higher degree of fear and superstitious behavior among women, such as switching shelters with each raid. Whereas female bunker-mates were often described by men as acting emotionally or, in their contemporary parlance, "hysterically" in the shelters,<sup>90</sup> men often tried to convey the impression of having been in control of the situation, as the earlier account of the young engineering assistant illustrates.

The account of the young engineer, whose housing community left the bunker when it became too hot from the fires all around, also shows that the population benefitted from their self-protection efforts in September 1944. Meanwhile, many *Hausgemeinschaften* decided to remain in their cellars even after the "all clear" had sounded. In a cruel twist of fate, an ammunition convoy that was stuck in Darmstadt due to lack of gasoline caught fire. Its wagons exploded one after the other for some time after the planes had turned away, creating the impression that bombs were still falling. Thus, many tenants waited too long to exit their shelters, and fires remained unchecked. The USSBS area study stated with hindsight: "This delay proved fatal to many. By the time the explosions from the convoy ceased, many cellars had been buried under heaps of rubble and people were trapped in their shelters and were suffocated by the smoke."<sup>91</sup> Generally, the flames leaped quickly from house to house, especially in the center of the medieval settlement where they generated a firestorm of apocalyptic dimensions. The fire blaze also reached Darmstadt's outskirts where "the draft was such that the flames roared through the streets almost horizontally just above the ground."<sup>92</sup>



The young engineer and his wife escaped from the firestorm unharmed. “We stayed out in that open place for several hours. I was exhausted and didn’t care about anything anymore. All I was interested in was the bare necessities of life for my wife and me.”<sup>93</sup> A 23-year old mother told a similar story: “I went into [sic] basement – baby on my arms and dragging old, blind mother behind – after 7 minutes my home was on fire, the heat became so great that we had to get out of the cellar. We crawled thru [sic] cellar window out into the street. Air pressures of mines tossed me around from one side of street to the other. I went to a friend’s house and after we were in that cellar we had to get out of there too, it caught on fire too. Then we ran 4 km to a farm house. I lost everything.”<sup>94</sup> The fire brigade, which was only 160 men strong and had a total of thirteen engines, was overwhelmed with the extent of the fires and their attempts at extinguishing the flames seemed pointless against the backdrop of a burning city.<sup>95</sup>

Hence, all that the people of Darmstadt could do was to wait for the fires to stop raging, then hurry to save their surviving possessions from looters. However, this undertaking proved to be psychologically extremely difficult, as the assistant explained in his account of September 12:

It was only then, when the urge of life [sic] had returned to a certain extent, that I began to realize what had actually happened. To see the bodies of women and children lying around, to see the burned and charred remains of human beings, to step on something soft and realize that you had stepped on a human corpse: these are experiences which you do not forget ever. I can’t tell more about it, even now.<sup>96</sup>

Such stories appear repeatedly in the Darmstadt interviews, recounting the horrors of the night that became known as “die Brandnacht”. Memories of this September night were highly disturbing. In most interviews, respondents either broke into tears or stopped their accounts

abruptly. Nobody was psychologically braced for the terrifying sights.<sup>97</sup> The young man and his wife tried to find consolidation in a place to stay and familiar faces, always hoping that their loved ones had been able to keep themselves safe. Yet, in fact, most of their family and friends had died or disappeared without a trace. His narrative of the September 11/12 raid, the most complete among the numerous interviews, illustrates exceptionally well the chronology of events while also sharing some of the terrible impressions of that night from a male perspective, with a strong underlying notion of male responsibility for the survival of women and the elderly.

Male accounts of the air raids do not contain the range of emotions that exists in the female interviews. This phenomenon may be ascribed to men's composure due to the interviewees' compliance with contemporary gender roles. In the 33-year-old engineering assistant's narrative, emotions relating to himself are largely absent. However, his wife's situation did concern him: "At first I used to worry about my wife when I was not at home; later I knew that she could take care of herself and was not worried."<sup>98</sup> Here the man clearly constructed his understanding of himself as the protector of his wife. When men talked about the attacks, their stories mostly centered on the people they considered the weakest in their vicinity. A 51-year-old civil servant also worried about his wife when he was away on nightshift: "I thought: If it shall hit me, it will. I was more worried about my wife than about myself. My wife was completely hysteric [sic]. I am an old soldier and can take it."<sup>99</sup> While it was, in his view, suitable and normal for a woman to be emotional, he was much stricter in the expectations of himself. However, to see the fear in women and children affected men greatly: "The shakings of the house, the crying of the women and children affected my nerves very badly," a city official aged 56 recalled.<sup>100</sup>

The image of the “old soldier” and references to World War I are recurrent themes in the interviews with the so-called “*Frontgeneration*” (front generation). It shows that older men drew on their war experiences as soldiers in WWI to cope with the situation under the bombs on the home front, but also supports Domansky’s observation of changing gender roles in World War I society when she claims that “men’s dominance over women derived no longer from their role as *fathers* but from their role as *soldiers*”.<sup>101</sup> Soldierly virtues such as honor and courage were held in high esteem. These men had seen death and destruction first-hand in combat. Having said this, it is important to take into consideration that the air war of the 1940s introduced a strategy and technology with which Germans, even those of the *Frontgeneration*, were not familiar. While the soldier generation of 1914 to 1918 seemed mentally better prepared for the wartime sufferings, even they felt powerless in the face of the ongoing attacks: “As an old soldier, it wasn’t so bad for me,” the 53-year old factory manager at Merck maintained. “Raids were hard on women and children. You wouldn’t have won the war without air supremacy. The bombing attacks worked on our morale – gave us a sense of powerlessness. We’d see them [the planes] going overhead 300 to 400 at a time, nothing we could do to stop them.”<sup>102</sup> The previous experience of active fatherland defense compounded their helplessness, because the *Frontgeneration* was now put in a static role in a different kind of war in which they tried, but failed, to protect women and children. Not being able to fulfill what they perceived as their manly duty, this situation was demoralizing for older men. Nevertheless, they maintained in the interviews that the raids “neither weakened nor strengthened” their will to carry on with the war. The Merck factory manager felt compelled to justify his inability to contribute to the defense of Germany: “They can’t say in this war the home front betrayed the fighting front. We did all we could, hung on till the last. We’d been through the worst here by September 1944. It couldn’t be any harder for

us.”<sup>103</sup> This statement alludes to the stab-in-the-back myth wherein seems to lie one explanation for German resilience — an invisible bond with the fighting front, an affective community of shared hardships that was countersigned by Third Reich propaganda. As long as soldiers were fighting, the home front would not betray them.

The younger generation of men seemed psychologically better equipped than the WWI veterans and generally reported fewer symptoms of alert psychosis than women.<sup>104</sup> Some young men who had been injured earlier in the war returned to Darmstadt. Their interviews reflect a high degree of experience with stressful and life-threatening situations. These case-hardened soldiers had already confirmed their masculinity in combat and fared well in terms of establishing a reasonably normal life under the bombs. Together with the old veterans, they had a better understanding of Allied strategy and warfare overall. Asked if he would blame the Allied air forces for bombing Germany, a 47-year-old business owner drew on his combat experience against France: “No. I saw what we did on the western front [sic]. I heard over the radio of the heavy destruction we had done to England. We did the same to others, why wouldn’t they bomb us when they got the chance.”<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, men without combat experience attempted to establish their masculinity through their intellect. Their political knowledge and strategic understanding yielded the bombing raids reasonable, or at least explainable. Maintaining that he expected to be bombed (one of a few exceptions who made this claim), a former Wehrmacht soldier and university assistant (29) recalled: “Yes, I expected it and was only amazed that it came at such a late date. Darmstadt was a railway junction and after all [had] some industries (...) I was prepared and know that air raids do occur in a war.”<sup>106</sup> In building resilience by normalizing the bombing and the suffering of the civilian population, this younger generation of men connected their experience of wartime sacrifice to the demands of the national cause.

The experience of loss and destruction was ubiquitous among Darmstaders as Allied analysis shows. “The fleet of four-engined bombers, flying at high altitude, met no opposition from either anti-aircraft or enemy fighters. The mechanics of the raid, between the ‘target sighted’ and ‘bombs away’ were almost perfunctory, and as a consequence Darmstadt was virtually destroyed,” the USSBS concluded on the performance of the raid.<sup>107</sup> The fire demolished approximately 78 percent of the city’s structures.<sup>108</sup> It “dehoused” 70,000 inhabitants and killed at least 8,433 people.<sup>109</sup> To this day, nobody knows the exact death toll, but it is evident that the bombs did not discriminate between nationalities, party membership, age, or gender. Among the confirmed dead were 2,129 children, 492 forced laborers, and 368 prisoners of war. Whereas 2,742 deaths of women were reported by October 1945, the number of dead men was considerably lower with 1,766, and less than one thousand military personnel were killed in the attack.<sup>110</sup> The fact that most men between 18 and 45 years of age were absent likely contributed to the gender imbalance of the death toll. The high number of child casualties, however, could have been avoided if the Darmstaders would have been willing to send their children to the countryside with the child evacuation program *Kinderlandverschickung*. But here, as in other smaller German cities, parents chose to keep their children close in dangerous situations.<sup>111</sup>

The immediate reaction of the Darmstaders to the destruction of their hometown was pure shock and disbelief. After earlier raids, the inhabitants had displayed resilience, as Police Station No. 3 reported in 1943: “The population, especially the severely affected, accepted their fate and distress with patience.”<sup>112</sup> The authorities had done their best to alleviate the physical and mental pain caused by bombings by reinstalling utilities repeatedly over the course of the air war. The presence of aid organizations had served as shock absorbers, but these functioning

structures had also projected a certain level of control and confirmed large parts of the population in their belief in the infallibility of the achievements of German material culture and the NSDAP.<sup>113</sup>

The attack of September 11/12, 1944 seems to have had different effects on the citizens of Darmstadt. While some were so terrified that they decided to stay in the forest at night or hardly left the shelters all day long for fear of additional air raids, others, like a 34-year-old mother of two boys, became irrationally calm: “After living through the raid of Sept. 11, I can say that I was used to them. The following raids hardly bothered me and [during] most attacks I stayed home.”<sup>114</sup> “I was not afraid anymore. I just wished they would knock out the whole town so we could live in peace,” recounted an exhausted housewife of 48 years.<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, she differentiated between the housing structures, which she seemed to accept to be a legitimate military target, and the people living in them. The affect of alleged communal desire for peace, in her eyes, dissociated the home front from the war goals of the political leadership. More than anything else, people became angry with the regime and turned war-weary: “Goebbels always said: ‘We must stand fast with strong hearts.’ (‘Wir müssen durchhalten und starke Herzen haben.’) He could afford to talk that way, he was sitting quite safely in his bunker and did not have to suffer and worry for his life,” an older woman grumbled.<sup>116</sup>

Darmstadtters blamed the city’s defenselessness on Hitler’s erroneous war strategy.<sup>117</sup> They felt self-pity and humiliation in the face of the material deprivations, which contradicted their belief in Germany’s leading role as a force of progress in the world. “We were living in a very primitive manner. We had no water for 2 months, no electricity for 6 weeks. I had to build a stove outside so I was able to cook,” a housewife and *Frauenwerk* member of 42 years of age complained to the USSBS interviewer. And she continued: “We had to live in a few rooms, we

could not dress decently anymore.”<sup>118</sup> Overall, it seems that the feeling of deprivation disturbed people most and, with the exception of deaths in the family, had the strongest effect on German resilience, caused disagreements, and loosened the affective bond of morale. Surrounded by destruction and death, the population believed that there was no safe place left.

At the same time, the government took great pains to restore trust in the home front. As the smoke was still lingering in the streets of Darmstadt, emergency relief organizations set to work.<sup>119</sup> Despite concerted efforts, with almost 80 per cent of the town’s buildings in ruins, not everybody could find a place to stay. Darmstadt police estimated that 49,200 persons, about 50 percent of the population, were sent to collecting centers at the city’s outskirts and then evacuated to 18 nearby towns and villages after this raid.<sup>120</sup> However, “within a month, according to the food rationing office, approximately 14,500 persons returned and an additional 2,700 came back during November and December.”<sup>121</sup>

At first glance it might seem curious that these Darmstadters chose to live in a demolished town over the safety that they could have had in the countryside. Traditional tensions between country and town appear to be a partial explanation for this. Furthermore, the experience of the September raid was exceptional, and difficult to grasp for the peasant population of the Odenwald region. As the interviews illustrate, Darmstadters felt that someone who had not experienced an area attack of such extent could not possibly understand what plight they were suffering; this notion was affirmed when the newspapers and radio broadcast covered only what was absolutely necessary on the Darmstadt raids.<sup>122</sup> By contrast, solidarity among Darmstadters remained strong, as a 31-year old war wife remembered: “Everybody that was able helped out. But it still didn’t make up for what one lost.”<sup>123</sup> Some people even put mutual help in the neighborhood before their own family. “When the raid was over we came out and were

amazed at the sight. I went along to the corner when there was a house on fire and helped rescue an old man of 80 who was ill. Then I went to look for my cousin. Their house was burning too,” a young mother recalled.<sup>124</sup> While the media’s silence about the extent of the raid was clearly motivated by propaganda considerations and war strategy, disappointed Darmstadters lost faith in the idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, and many of them decided rather to return to their destroyed hometown and the community that shared their past experiences. In these cases, morale emerged through deeds of solidarity; symbols were no longer sufficient.

This was also true for official symbolic gestures to bridge the gap between individual suffering and the overall war effort, such as badges for the wounded (*Verwundetenabzeichen*) that the city awarded to citizens who were injured in the homeland.<sup>125</sup> A turn to more emphatic language in the local newspapers when addressing fatalities on the home front attempted the same: “What shakes us most is the sight of so many mothers and children murdered during the latest raid [on Frankfurt]. They did not fall in vain! Even women, children and old people can fall like soldiers.”<sup>126</sup> Likewise, the Darmstadt administration and police force changed their language when talking about the effects of aerial attacks within the year between the first larger attack on September 23, 1943 and the devastating raid almost twelve months later. After the September 1944 raid, the police reports suddenly spoke of air raid victims as “*Gefallene*,” a term usually used to refer to soldiers killed in action.<sup>127</sup> In fact, Stargardt observes an earlier softening of official language in the winter of 1942/43, when after the first large-scale air raids the term “sacrifice”, formerly reserved for fallen front-line soldiers, entered the reporting on the home-front dead.<sup>128</sup> Officials thus first likened and then eventually equated the wartime plight of the civilian population to that of soldiers in defense of the country. Women were still not allowed to kill for the fatherland, yet their sacrifice was acknowledged as equality in patriotic death. Both



the badges for injuries and the shift in language signify dissolution of the binary gendered construction of home front and battlefield. However, these efforts apparently yielded little effect, or at least Darmstadters readily forgot about them. Not one of the interviewees, of whom a considerable portion was wounded, even mentioned the badges in the spring of 1945. The attempt to convey a sense of purpose for the sufferings endured by Germans under the bombs failed, while it further undermined traditional gender norms.

### **Conclusion**

The myth of the German home front as united in the *Volksgemeinschaft* had already crumbled by the time USSBS interviewers set to work in Darmstadt. Bringing lines of contention and agreement between state and its citizens to the fore, the September 1944 raid highlights the ways in which a heavy attack put the Nazi regime under pressure. Contrary to the intent to induce communal cohesion, many aspects of gendered Nazi policy created instead an atmosphere of suspicion. Women were caught between policing of their reproductive bodies and the changing expectations about their increasingly militarized role in the war effort. Against the backdrop of the stab-in-the-back myth, men struggled with their failure to meet expectations as defenders of the home front and protectors of women and children. It started with the war of nerves in bunkers and cellars under Allied bombs, where the experience of helplessness undermined men's soldierly self-perception. Moreover, the realities of everyday life in the destroyed city worked against official pleas for perseverance. Primitive living conditions frustrated large parts of the Darmstadt population and made them increasingly war-weary.

Morale and will to go on in an unwinnable war was heavily defined by how the individual related to the affective national and immediate local community. It is here that the self emerges

in relation to gendered social and institutional structures, especially in the politicized interview setting of the USSBS. These dynamics bring about insights that can fruitfully inform how historians view late-WWII home front society and the emergence of air war memory. First, high self-awareness among respondents played into gendered expectations of their interviewers by evoking archetypes, for instance the vigilant mother and caring daughter, the male protector, or the helpless older woman. Second, they constructed their gendered subjectivity in response to changed social and political dynamics under Nazism and the requirements of war. Third, respondents felt the need to justify their actions vis-à-vis the occupation authority, albeit not apologetically, but rather in keeping with the calls for duty to the fatherland that had decisively shaped German wartime society. Working in defense of the country, young women not only reintegrated into the community that had put them under scrutiny through Nazi reproductive policy, but they also developed into a significant and officially acknowledged pillar of the public sphere as the end of the Third Reich was nearing. Their wartime experience stimulated a change in gender relations that preceded “the hour of the women” of the occupation period, famously embodied by the *Trümmerfrauen*.

Instrumental for survival during the chaotic hours of the air raids was, however, the solidarity of the neighborhood, even if it was temporally and spatially bound. Men and women connected with people in their vicinity who shared the same fate, and supported each other in the struggle to survive and resettle after the smoke had cleared away. These spontaneous but real affective communities enabled them to live on despite individual feelings of powerlessness and indifference. Paradoxically, the Allied machinery of destruction created the bond that Nazi ideology had striven in vain to achieve.

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<sup>1</sup> Limmer, August 25, 1944. Stadtarchiv Darmstadt [hereafter referred to as StD], Tagebücher Fritz Limmer, No. 20 (03/01/1944-03/28/1945).

<sup>2</sup> A comparative gender discussion of the European war experience can be found in Mary Vincent (ed.), Theme Issue: Gender and War in Europe c. 1918-1949, *Contemporary European History* 10, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>3</sup> The literature on Nazi reproductive policy and gender relations is wide and varied, representatives include Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in a Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Domansky, "Reproduction and Militarization during World War I", in Geoff Eley (ed.), *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996), 437.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Hagemann, "Home/Front: The Military, Violence and Gender Relations in the Age of the World Wars", in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, Violence and Gender Relations in the Age of the World Wars* (New York: Berg, 2002), 17.

<sup>6</sup> See Belinda J. Davis, *Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Providing a complete list of works on Allied bombing of Germany would go beyond the scope of this reference note. Leading works include Conrad C. Cane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993); Jörg Echternkamp (ed.), *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. IX/I (Oxford: Clarendon, 2008), especially pp. 372-476; Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg, 1940-1945*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002); A. C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities: The History and Moral Legacy of the WWII Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan*, 1st American ed. (New York: Walker & Co., 2006); Olaf Groehler, *Bombenkrieg gegen Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1990); Alan J. Levine, *The Strategic Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> One thorough account addressing these issues is Irntraud Permooser's *Der Luftkrieg über München, 1942-1945; Bomben auf die Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, 2nd ed. (Oberhaching: Aviatic Verlag, 1997). See also Earl Ray Beck, *Under the Bombs: The German Home Front, 1942-1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky,

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1986); Richard Grunberger, *Das Zwölfjährige Reich: Der Deutschen Alltag unter Hitler* (Wien: Molden 1971); Malis G. Steinert, *Hitlers Krieg und die Deutschen. Stimmung und Haltung der deutschen Bevölkerung im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1970); Jill Stephenson, *Hitler's Homefront: Württemberg under the Nazis* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Jörg Arnold, *The Allied Air War and Urban Memory: The Legacy of Strategic Bombing in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce and Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Schedule B Question by Question Objectives, NARA, Record Group 243, Entry 6, Box 511, Folder 64b f29.

<sup>13</sup> The USSBS interviews are depersonalized and not ordered by number. They will be marked by the interviewer's last name, serial number, and date of interview. Facer #3, 5/18/1945. Record Group 243, Entry 6, Box 510, Folder 64b f25 [1 of 2].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Maynes, Pierce and Laslett, *Telling Stories*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> This approach is mindful of the challenges that both ahistorical deconstructivism and textual analysis pose to historical scholarship. For a detailed critique see Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91/5 (April 1986): 1053-75, and Mary Poovey, "Feminism and Deconstruction," *Feminist Studies* 14 (Spring 1988): 51-65.

<sup>17</sup> For overviews see Atina Grossman, "Remarks on Current Trends and Directions in German Women's History," *Women in German Yearbook* 12 (1996): 11-25, especially 18; Adelheid von Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," in David Crew, ed., *Nazism and German Society 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), 141-65; and Elizabeth Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past," *Central European History* 38, no. 1 (2005): 41-74.

<sup>18</sup> For a recent treatment of the debate see Bas von Benda-Beckmann, *A German Catastrophe? German Historians and the Allied Bombings, 1945 – 2010* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010). See also Lothar Kettenacker, ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern? Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940-45* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003); Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley:

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University of California Press, 2001); Susanne Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt: Literature of Wartime Bombing in German* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003); Arnold, *The Allied Air War and Urban Memory*. This debate is also reflected in the increasing number of German wartime memoirs and published diaries that first appeared in the 1990s. See for example Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben: Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996) and Andreas Wojak (ed.), *Wir werden auch weiterhin unsere Pflicht tun: Kriegsbriefe einer Familie in Deutschland, 1940-1945* (Bremen: Temmen, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Neil Gregor, "A Schicksalsgemeinschaft? Allied Bombing, Civilian Morale, and the Social Dissolution in Nuremberg, 1942-1945," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (December 2000), 1051-1070.

<sup>20</sup> These are conservative estimates on the lower end of the spectrum taken from *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 7. Numbers go as high as half a million fatalities; Jörg Friedrich estimates are at 600,000. The USSBS survey establishes the total population of the Old Reich at 69,800,000.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Clarke, "Panic: Myth or Reality?," *Contexts* (2002): 21- 26, here 22.

<sup>22</sup> The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, "The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale, volume II", printed in David MacIsaac (ed.), *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (New York 1976), IV, 32-3 and also *United States Strategic Bombing Summary Report European War*, Washington D.C., 30 September 1945 <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AAF/USSBS/ETO-Summary.html#tc> accessed on 7 March 2015; Moeller, "On the History of Man-Made Destruction," 108.

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation under Arms* (London: Vintage, 2016), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Cocks, "Sick Heil: Self and Illness in Nazi Germany," *Osiris* 22, 1 (2007): 93-115, here 107.

<sup>25</sup> Christian Goeschel, "Suicide at the End of the Third Reich," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 1 (2006): 153-173, here 161.

<sup>26</sup> See Ben Anderson, "Modulating the Excess of Affect: Morale in a State of 'Total War'", in *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 161-185 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 178.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Deppert/Engels, *Feuersturm und Widerstand: Darmstadt 1944* (Darmstadt: H. L. Schlapp, 2004), 14.

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<sup>29</sup> Valentin Schröder, “Reichstagswahlen Wahlkreis Hessen-Darmstadt”, 2014. <http://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wrtwhessendarmstadt.htm>. Accessed on 3 December 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Population Chart Darmstadt 1938/1940 - Aug. 1944, U.S. National Archives and Record Administration in College Park [hereafter referred to as NARA], Records of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, Record Group 243, Entry 6, Box 605, Folder 65c 19.

<sup>31</sup> Ernährungsamt Darmstadt, Übersicht über die Zahl der versorgungsberechtigten Personen im Stadtkreis, 6/13/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 605, File 65c 19.

<sup>32</sup> Beratungsstelle des Hilfsvereins der Juden in Deutschland und Palästinaamt, Statistik der ausgewanderten Juden aus dem Freistaat Hessen, 1939 till 1941, HSAD, RG G12B, File 23/9; Jüdische Kultusvereinigung Israel. Religionsgemeinde Darmstadt e.V. an die Geheime Staatspolizei Darmstadt betr. Monatliche Einwohnermeldung, Oct. 1939 till Nov. 1940, HSAD, RG G12B, File 23/10.

<sup>33</sup> The first transport left on March 20, 1942 for Piaski-Lublin followed by three more transports on September 27 and 30, 1942, and on February 10, 1943. See Liste der aus Hessen am 20. März 1942 nach Piaski-Lublin deportierten Juden, undated, HSAD, RG G12B, File 23/27; Deportationslisten, 27. September 1942 nach Theresienstadt, 30. September 1942 in das Generalgouvernement, 10. Februar 1943 nach Theresienstadt, undated, HSAD, RG G12B, File 23/28.

<sup>34</sup> These figures include prisoners of war. *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: A Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt, Germany* (Area Studies Division Report No. 6, 1945), 10-11.

<sup>35</sup> Geheime Staatspolizei Darmstadt an die Aussendienststellen, die Herren Landräte, das Polizeipräsidium Mainz und die Polizeidirektionen sowie das Polizeiamt Bad-Nauheim/Friedberg betr. Massnahmen gegen Juden, 9/12/1939, HSAD, RG G12B, File 36/2.

<sup>36</sup> See for example Christian Graf von Krockow, *Hour of the Women*, translated by Krishna Winston (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991); Elizabeth Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity”, *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (1996): 354-395 and the monograph by the same author *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> For more details on the strategical and technological development of strategic bombing see Thomas Childers, “Facilis descensus averni est: The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Issue of German Suffering,”

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*Central European History*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2005), 82-87 and Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: Norton & Company, 1995), 101-133.

<sup>38</sup> Childers, “Facilis descensus averni est,” 83.

<sup>39</sup> *USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> The Allies dropped approximately 29,500 tons of bombs on Frankfurt. In the scope of the USSBS survey, only Hamburg, Cologne, and Essen experienced heavier bombing. *USSBS: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> See for example Oberlander, #22, 05/04/1945; Brandenburger #21, 05/04/1945; Brandenburger #20, 05/04/1945, NARA, Record Group 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f23 [1 of 2].

<sup>44</sup> Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), 307.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>46</sup> Aufstellung, Organisation des Luftschutzes im Luftschutzort Darmstadt, 04/23/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2 [2 of 3].

<sup>47</sup> Echternkamp (ed.), *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. IX/I, 398.

<sup>48</sup> Meyer-Hohenberg #21, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [2 of 2].

<sup>49</sup> Aufstellung, “Luftschutzräume in Darmstadt, die vor der Zerstörung der Stadt als öffentliche Luftschutzräume und Sammelschutzräume vorhanden waren,” 04/10/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 1.

<sup>50</sup> See *Völkischer Beobachter*, “Kellergassen durch die Nachbarhäuser,” 11/08/1943, NARA, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 65, Folder 287.

<sup>51</sup> Rundschreiben vom Mobilisierungsbeauftragten an alle Kreisleiter betr. Richtlinien für Alarmierung, 11/18/1940, HSAD, RG N1, File (W) 3826.

<sup>52</sup> Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 37-43.

<sup>53</sup> Limmer, 9/12/1944, StD. Fritz Limmer kept record of the air raids in Darmstadt until he moved to the country after the devastating raid of September 11/12, 1944. A report on the extent of damage inflicted on the city by Allied bombing, compiled by the Statistical Agency Darmstadt in the late 1940s or early 1950s, lists seventeen

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air assaults between July 22, 1941 and March 24, 1945, of which it considered eight to have been of “larger scale.”

Compilation of war damage, not dated, StD, RG ST 63/ 1H, Folder “Brandnacht.”

<sup>54</sup> Police statement, 30 January 1943, StD, RG ST 63, Folder “Verstoß gegen Bestimmungen des Luftschutzes und der Verdunkelung”.

<sup>55</sup> Police statement, 22 April 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Police statement, 4 May 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> See discussion of the November 1943 women’s protest against evacuation policies in Witten. Julia S. Torrie, *“For Their Own Good”: Civilian Evacuations in Germany and France, 1939-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 96-98.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>59</sup> See Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*

<sup>60</sup> Boeger #4, 05/19/1945. This married, yet childless woman was very upset about the social status she inhabited, and pressure to be present she experienced at her workplace.

<sup>61</sup> USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt, 10-11.

<sup>62</sup> *Neue Deutsche Zeitung*, “Women to join the Fire Brigades,” 06/11/1943, translated for Digest, NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 65, Folder 287.

<sup>63</sup> *Transocean*, “Women as Fire Guards,” 07/06/1944, translated for Far East, NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 65, Folder 287.

<sup>64</sup> DNB, “Women on AA Defence Service,” 07/11/1944, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> For an analysis of the negative societal perception of women working in the military *Etappe* during WWI see Bianca Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines and Adventurous Girls: Red Cross Nurses and Women Army Auxiliaries in the First World War”, in Hagemann and Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, 87-114.

<sup>67</sup> Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, translated by Richard Deveson (1982; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 99.



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<sup>68</sup> See Darmstadt USSBS interviews with women aged 30 to 50. For a discussion of women's mobilization for the war effort see Leila J. Rupp, "Women, Class, and Mobilization in Nazi Germany", *Science & Society* 43/1, (1979): 51-69.

<sup>69</sup> Himmelstoss #H1, May 1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [1 of 2].

<sup>70</sup> Boeger #3, 05/18/1945, *ibid.* The interviewee's husband died as a soldier in the war.

<sup>71</sup> Brink #2(a), undated, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed discussion of Third Reich gender roles see Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Part I", *History Workshop* 1 (1076): 74-113.

<sup>73</sup> Cocks, "Sick Heil", 108.

<sup>74</sup> Meyer-Hohenberg #21, 05/02/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [2 of 2].

<sup>75</sup> *DNB*, "Alert Psychosis," 06729/1943, translation of article by Prof. Dr. Schenck of the Central Office for Public Health of the NSDAP, NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 65, Folder 286 "All Air-War Reports Previous to October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944."

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> See for example a 20-year-old woman who was raised in the HJ-spirit and drafted to the AA-units. Boeger #2, 05/08/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [1 of 2].

<sup>78</sup> Kurtz # 28, 05/08/1945. Comments in parentheses were added by the interviewer.

<sup>79</sup> For minutiae of the attack see RAF Operations Record Book: Detail of work carried out by No. 627 squadron for the month of September 1944, page 6, StD, RG ST 62, Folder 1C. The USSBS area study of Darmstadt lists the tonnage of bombs. *USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 5b.

<sup>80</sup> Kurtz # 28, 05/08/1945, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [1 of 2].

<sup>81</sup> Gregor, "Civilian Morale in Nuremberg," 1056.

<sup>82</sup> Workman #2, 05/17/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [2 of 2].

<sup>83</sup> Stellvertretender Gauleiter der NSDAP and alle Kreisleiter betr. Abwurf von Blechkanistern mit Phosphorkautschuklösung als Brandstiftmittel, 10/1/1941, HSAD, RG N1, File (W) 3826.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> See Office of Strategic Services newspaper clippings. NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 65, Folder 286.

<sup>86</sup> Hicks #2, 5/9/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 510, Folder 64b f27 [1 of 2].

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- <sup>87</sup> See for example Facer #1, 05/17/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [2 of 2].
- <sup>88</sup> Diefenbach #1, 05/08/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f24 [1 of 2].
- <sup>89</sup> See for instance Boeger #3, 05/18/1945.
- <sup>90</sup> Nicholas Stargardt points to the fact that “hysterical” women on the home front were also blamed for the loss of WWI in 1918. *The German War*, 74.
- <sup>91</sup> USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt, 10.
- <sup>92</sup> Kurtz # 28, 05/08/1945.
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>94</sup> Brink #1, 05/18/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 510, Folder 64b f25 [1 of 2].
- <sup>95</sup> Aufstellung, Organisation des Luftschutzes im Luftschutzort Darmstadt.
- <sup>96</sup> Kurtz # 28, 05/08/1945.
- <sup>97</sup> See Darmstadt USSBS interviews.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup> Blitz #1, 05/08/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [1 of 2].
- <sup>100</sup> Brandenburger #19, 05/04/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f23 [2 of 2].
- <sup>101</sup> Domansky, “Reproduction and Militarization during World War I”, 437.
- <sup>102</sup> Gottlieb #1, 05/08/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f 24 [2 of 2].
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup> DNB, “Alert Psychosis,” 06729/1943, translation of article.
- <sup>105</sup> Facer #3, 05/18/1945.
- <sup>106</sup> Fluss #22, 05/04/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 501, Folder 64b f 23 [2 of 2].
- <sup>107</sup> USSBS: *Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 6.
- <sup>108</sup> Statistisches Amt Darmstadt, Zusammenstellung der Kriegsschäden und Verluste durch die Luftangriffe (1939-1945) im Stadtkreis Darmstadt, not dated, StD, RG ST 63, Folder 1H “Brandnacht.”
- <sup>109</sup> The death toll varies in several reports because demographic data was destroyed in the fire of September 11/12, 1944. Estimations expected 5,000 more dead once all former inhabitants of Darmstadt had returned, amounting to overall 10 percent of the pre-war population and thus the highest death toll in any German city. For detailed listings see Statistisches Amt Darmstadt, Die bei Luftangriffen auf Darmstadt entstandenen

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Personenverluste, undated, StD, RG ST 63, Folder 1H "Brandnacht" and *USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 9a.

<sup>110</sup> See *USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 9a.

<sup>111</sup> Neil Gregor describes the difficulties of the KLV in Nuremberg. Gregor. "Civilian Morale in Nuremberg," 1942-1945, 1062-1063.

<sup>112</sup> 3. Polizeirevier Darmstadt betr. Fliegerangriff auf Darmstadt am 23. September 1934, 10/01/1943, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2.

<sup>113</sup> Fluss # 22, 05/04/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f23 [2 of 2].

<sup>114</sup> Brink #2(a), undated, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f25 [1 of 2].

<sup>115</sup> Plunder #1, 05/08/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f24 [1 of 2].

<sup>116</sup> Brink #1, 05/08/1945, *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> See USSBS interviews in NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f23 [2 of 2].

<sup>118</sup> Himmelstoss #2, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f24 [1 of 2].

<sup>119</sup> See Diefenbach #2, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 509, Folder 64b f24 [1 of 2]; 3. Polizeirevier Darmstadt betr. Fliegerangriff auf Darmstadt am 23. September 1934, 10/01/1943, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2.

<sup>120</sup> Polizeipräsident and die Amerikanische Militärregierung, 04/11/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 1.

<sup>121</sup> *USSBS: Detailed Study of the Effects of Area Bombing on Darmstadt*, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Knowing that the enemy monitored national newspapers, the details given in articles on bombing supplied little information about the extent and the death toll of raids. *Transocean*, "Casualty in Darmstadt," 11/14/1944, NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 67, Folder 385 "Darmstadt;" *Transocean*, "Damage in Darmstadt," 10/31/1944, *ibid.* See also Stargard, *The German War*, 360-61.

<sup>123</sup> Boeger #4, 05/19/1945.

<sup>124</sup> Arran #4, 05/18/1945, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 510, Folder 64b f24 [2 of 2].

<sup>125</sup> 4. Polizeirevier Darmstadt betr. Verleihung des Verwundetenabzeichens für im Heimatgebiet zu Schaden gekommene Volksgenossen, 11/15/1944, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2.

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<sup>126</sup> *Rhein-Mainische Zeitung*, untitled editorial, 10/10/1943, translated for Digest, NARA, RG 226, Entry 145, Box 67, Folder 286 “All Air-War Reports Previous to October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944.”

<sup>127</sup> 3. Polizeirevier Darmstadt betr. Fliegerangriff auf Darmstadt am 23. September 1934, 10/01/1943, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2; 1. Polizeirevier Darmstadt betr. Schlußbericht zum Terrorangriff am 11.9.1944, 10/20/1944, NARA, RG 243, Entry 6, Box 339, Folder 37 d 2.

<sup>128</sup> Stargardt, *The German War*, 357.